

## Stop Ulu Muda logging first, then give RM100 mil, Penang tells Putrajaya

FMT Reporters August 28, 2020 11:12 AM



*A section of the Ulu Muda forest reserve near Pedu dam cleared, apparently for timber. (Sahabat Alam Malaysia pic).*

GEORGE TOWN: Penang's water utility company today voiced support for Kedah's move to ask for RM100 million from Putrajaya to protect a forest reserve, but hoped it will meet certain conditions before that.

The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) said Kedah should terminate all logging concessions in the Ulu Muda forests as well as mark 160,000ha there as a water catchment area.

This is because Kedah draws 96%, Perlis 70% and Penang 80% of raw water from the rivers in the reserve, benefitting some 4.2 million consumers.

"The Ulu Muda reserve is an irreplaceable and indispensable resource. Logging Ulu Muda would have repercussions extending beyond environmental destruction," PBA's chief executive officer, Jaseni Maidinsa, said in a statement.

"Taps will run dry in Perlis, Kedah and Penang without sufficient raw water from Ulu Muda, coming at a time when we are fighting a pandemic and recovering from it.

"With so much at stake, the federal government should take this opportunity to compensate and work with Kedah to ensure the state protects Ulu Muda for the benefit of the Northern Corridor Economic Region and its people, totally and in perpetuity."

Recently, Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor said his government would seek RM100 million funding from Putrajaya to help preserve the Ulu Muda forests.

In May, he said the state had to pay RM1.5 billion in damages to some 40 timber concession holders after their rights to log in permanent forest reserves were withdrawn by the previous state government under Mukhriz Mahathir.

Sanusi had earlier proposed giving replacement forests for these concession holders to harvest, but green groups objected to it, saying it would defeat the purpose of protecting Kedah's forests.